

The Honorable Judge Clark,

Over the last five years, the only time that my family has felt safe is when Robert Merkle is behind bars. His threats to assault, rape, and kill my daughters started in 2017. That's when he made it known that he knew where the first daughter worked and lived. In fear of her life, she fled her apartment in the night and did not return.

She moved several times to find a safe place to live, scrubbed her information from the internet, changed jobs, changed phone numbers, and continued to live in terror that Merkle will find her and carry out his threats. Relief came only when he was arrested and was behind bars. But it did not last.

As soon as Merkle was released on parole, he started it all over again. After searching for and failing to find his previous victim, my first daughter, Merkle found a new victim, and the threats to my second daughter's safety began in 2021.

The terror Merkle inflicted has affected our entire family and has been immense. We've purchased home cameras and security equipment, changed locks and phone numbers, had local police conduct extra patrols, and constantly looked over our shoulders. We've had to warn family members, coworkers, and friends to also be alert because once he gets out again, anyone could be his next target.

The financial cost to our family has been high – legal fees, relocation expenses, lost time at work, changing phone numbers, home and personal security equipment, not to mention the lost experiences due to fear and anxiety. But the highest cost to me as mother has been the emotional toll of someone threatening my daughters and not being able to guarantee their safety. I have watched once confident young women become more isolated and exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, being hypervigilant, easily startled and suspicious of anyone they don't know. It has been heartbreaking and horrific.

Merkle has already proven that his behavior does not stop when he is on probation. I know this because I've seen the texts he sent threatening to rape and kill my daughter while he was under the supervision of the state. His previous sentences for offenses to multiple victims served concurrently did not stop his behavior and it did not keep my family safe once he was released on probation.

I implore you to sentence Robert Merkle to the fullest extent the law allows consecutively with the other offenses against him, to find him a prior and persistent offender, and to prevent his access to any devices that can access the internet.

The only time my family has slept well since 2017 has been while Robert Merkle is behind bars. Please help keep him where he belongs so my family can feel safe again and heal from the trauma he has inflicted on us and so many others.

Thank you,

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Mother of two of Robert Merkle's victims